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ABSTRACT

Devélopmental assets are a research-based list of the essential building blocks of healthy youth development and comprise the relationships, experiences, and values that youth need to grow up caring, confident, and responsible. In November, 2001, Assets for Colorado Youth (ACY) convened a group of educators, students, and family advocates from the Denver area to discuss strategies and needs for infusing strength-based youth development into schools using the framework of 40 developmental assets. This report delineates the developmental assets and describes their connection to academic achievement.The report also presents highlights from forum participants, delineates participants' questions, and makes recommendations about what educators need to move forward in their endeavors. Beginning with a list of the forum participants, the report describes the purpose of the forum. Participants' questions are then listed, related to building leadership, effective strategies for integrating assets, breaking through resistance around parent involvement, helping educators understand that the asset framework is a philosophy rather than a program, encouraging student involvement, and aligning the curriculum with assets. Next, the report highlights school and organization actions reflecting the opinions of educators, administrators, students, parents, and school psychologists from elementary, middle, and high school levels. Tools educators need to move forward are highlighted, including integration of assets into professional development programs, a directory of schools involved in asset-building efforts, and hands-on ideas for educators. Finally, the report delineates five assets identified as tied to strong academic outcomes: achievement motivation, school engagement, homework, bonding to school, and reading for pleasure. The report concludes with annotated bibliography of asset resources for educators and information about ACY. (KB)

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ED 474 493

ASSETS for Colorado YOUTH

A discussion of strategies and needs in taking the asset framework into schools.

Educators' Forum of Asset Champions

PS031096

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The mission of Assets for Colorado Youth is to champion change for positive youth development by building capacity, focusing on individual and community strengths, and increasing developmental assets in youth.

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Purpose of the Forum

On November 5, 2001, Assets for Colorado Youth (ACY) convened a group of 21 educators, students, and family advocates from the metropolitan Denver area who were engaged in infusing strength-based youth development into schools using the framework of the 40 developmental assets.*

During the 3-1/2 hour forum at Ana Marie Sandoval Academy in northwest Denver, participants discussed their strategies and needs in taking the asset framework into schools. Half of the participants were administrators—including seven principals and one area superintendent. Three attendees were prevention advisors or school psychologists, four were parents or parent advocates, four were students, and one was a middle school teacher.

Participants discussed their strategies and needs in taking the asset framework into schools.

The forum was designed to serve several purposes. For ACY, a statewide resource for asset-building efforts across Colorado, staff were able to hear the needs of educators firsthand as a way to better position the organization's products and services to meet the needs of the education sector. Participants, on the other hand, received ideas, inspiration, and motivation from sharing together.

Dr. Christine Johnson, president of the Community College of Denver, gave an opening talk on the importance of expanding options for student success and leveraging strengths in the community to achieve her goal.

The educators then listed the questions they came with before each participant shared highlights and materials from their asset-building efforts. Finally, the group responded to the question: "What do you need to move forward?"

Early results of the forum are already coming to fruition in the schools of some participants as they adopt or modify other educators' strategies for their own staff, students, and parents. For example, Principal Deborah Lanman of Kepner Middle School in Denver is moving forward with offering a Leadership elective in each grade that is based on building the 40 developmental assets.

ACY will determine in the coming months whether to reconvene the group or to hold similar forums in the education sector.

**The 40 developmental assets were identified by Search Institute from surveys of more than 100,000 6th–12th graders across the country. (www.search-institute.org)*

Questions From Participants

Question—

How do we build leadership in students, parents, and teachers?

Question—

How do we integrate assets: Where do we start? What are the most effective strategies?

Question—

How do we break through resistance around parent involvement?

Question—

How can assets directly support learning and CSAP scores and how can we be assured of having enough time devoted to staff and students to allow asset integration? ("Kids are now seen as score-producers, not valued individuals")

Question—

What are the best tools to demonstrate how to be an asset builder on a daily basis in classrooms and to help educators understand that the asset framework is not a program, but a philosophy?

Question—

How do we measure the impact of the asset philosophy? How can we be innovative? How can we better understand how assets can be integrated into schools?

Question—

How do we get students involved in making assets happen?

Question—

How do we sustain asset-building efforts with new staff and new students coming in all the time?

Question—

How do we network to better promote the asset framework?

Question—

How do we convince school administrators that the asset framework is not another program, and that it has value?

Question—

How do we align the curriculum with the assets so we can make it a part of everyday learning?

Question—

How do we get asset-building initiatives on the school CSAP report cards? How do we influence the indicators that frame school assessment?

Question—

How do we specifically influence the asset language so that people get it conceptually and the message gets across the threshold?

How can we better understand how assets can be integrated into schools?

School/Organizational Highlights

Overland High School Student—

Overland High School and the Cherry Creek School District have youth advisory boards that meet monthly to integrate assets into schools. The district's Youth Advisory Board hosts or participates in community projects, encourages drug-free and violence-free schools, and provides peer mediation. Youth members do presentations in the community.

The district's Youth Advisory Board puts on a Youth Summit each year for people across the community to define the "community values youth" asset. The summit shows youth how to empower their lives.

Overland High School Student—

Overland hosts an annual "Eye on Overland" week each year, coordinated by students, and brings in speakers to promote leadership.

Overland High School Student—

At Overland High School, Youth Advisory members sent around a student survey to see what assets students think they have or not and to see which assets to focus on.

Overland High School Student—

At a community health fair, students helped sell individual asset signs to businesses as a way to get sponsor dollars. The businesses put the signs up to help promote the assets.

Cherry Creek School District's Prevention Coordinator —

From the district's Safe/Drug-Free Schools funds, each high school receives $3,000 and each middle school $2,000 for projects tied to the asset framework.

Columbine Connections Parent Advocate—

In staff trainings in the Jefferson County School District, teachers are asked to list every program and club in the school and to identify the assets addressed through each one. This shows that the staff does have time to build assets because asset-building is already happening in the school. The staff only needs to be intentional about building them.

Districtwide in Jefferson County, the PTA is using the asset framework to intentionally create a welcoming environment in each school. PTA members learned hands-on ideas at the Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth National Conference and from Clay Robert's publication, *Great Places to Learn.*

A soon-to-be-published report, "The American School's Fund," will tie character education to the asset framework. The report will look at how the assets apply to each of 13 character traits.

Sunrise Elementary School Psychologist–

To provide positive recognition for leadership and asset building, the psychologist developed the Sunrise Awards. At the beginning of each month's school assembly, students are recognized for their positive behaviors and academics. The shift by teachers and students from deficit thinking to positive thinking has caught on, and the number of awards has grown from

At the beginning of each month's school assembly, students are recognized for their positive behaviors and academics.

Highlights — continued

3 to 25 per assembly. Award winners' names are posted on a bulletin board in the hallway and remain up for the semester.

The school social worker started a "Garden of Kindness" where students who were recognized for kind acts were given the opportunity to plant flowers and work in the garden. Each teacher now holds a weekly class meeting for recognizing positive acts.

Palmer Elementary School Principal—

Focus groups with parents and teachers asked what was most needed in the school. Parents wanted more student achievement and connection to the school. A parent group now meets regularly to identify and implement asset-building strategies. One strategy is offering after-school clubs. Now, 80 percent of students participate in clubs—including homework, chess, karate, and a neighborhood club where students get to know and help out their neighbors.

A Pep Night for Parents was held early in the school year, providing dinner and speakers on the topic, "10 Ways to Help Students Have a Great Year." The PTA gives asset calendars to each family at the holiday program. Articles on the asset framework also appear regularly in the newsletter. The principal now provides information on assets in meetings with parents whose child is struggling.

Denison Montessori School Principal—

Asset integration at Denison is two-pronged: student-based, and staff-parent-community-based. Last year, the student focus was on identity and leadership. The school merged bullyproofing, life skills training, and the assets into one program, the Peace Program. One result was a talent show.

For the adult component, the principal sought the endorsement of the Collaborative Decision-Making committee. She then sent out a needs assessment to parents and organized a team to carry the message forward. The principal provided each teacher with a copy of the ACY publication, *The Power of Parents,* and other asset education materials, overlaying the Montessori philosophy onto the framework. Parent engagement is now an objective for teachers and, as part of their appraisal, each must create a parent-engagement portfolio.

East Middle School Prevention Coordinator—

The top-down approach in this middle school exposed administrators to the assets. Teachers received an introduction to the asset framework through an in-service training. The findings from their students' results on the *Search Institute Attitudes and Behaviors* survey, compared with the findings nationally, helped move them from a deficit to a positive approach with kids.

Students involved with after-school enrichment programs fill out an asset survey for assessment. "Most Valuable Player" nights are held five times a year in partnership with the local recreation center, drawing more than 300 students to each event.

The prevention coordinator placed asset messages throughout the school: a

Parent engagement is now an objective for teachers and, as part of their appraisal, each must create a parent-engagement portfolio.

banner over the school entrance reads, "East Builds Assets," and each classroom has all 40 assets and a framed message. Students change the asset in the frame each week. Asset information is published in the school newsletter, and a library of asset materials are available for teachers to check out.

Highline Community School Principal–

The principal utilized the district's bullyproofing curriculum in conjunction with a strong asset component to teach students the importance of a caring majority. Teachers and counselors reinforce the behaviors. The principal believes achievement best happens when students feel safe and valued. He calls each student he passes in the hall by name. Students also learn citizenship skills working with seniors at a near-by senior's center. In five years, the school's test scores have climbed from the 30th percentile to the 70th.

The principal tells all new parents, "This will be the best school your child has been to—if not, I want to hear about it." To have parent involvement, the staff must build trust through focusing on strengths. The school has provided day-care, hired bi-lingual office staff, and conducted home visits to raise parent-teacher conference attendance to 95 percent.

Teacher empowerment is a key component. Staff meetings begin with teacher recognitions. Teachers are involved in all decision at the school.

Horace Mann Middle School Principal—

The principal invited ACY to provide an asset training for staff in anticipation of the school's "unsatisfactory" CSAP score. The staff identified with the framework's tenets that asset-building requires a community-wide effort. The staff designed a pledge of support for teachers, students, and parents. These outlined the specific roles each needs to play to guarantee academic outcomes. All parents who attended parent-teacher conferences signed pledges. The exercise of defining expectations for the three groups empowered teachers. The challenge will be determining how each group accounts for what they do.

Cherry Creek School District Prevention Coordinator—

The asset initiative came from a groundswell in the community and changes are slowly taking hold around the district. Stability of leadership and the ability to cultivate new asset champions is key. Bringing people together to dream about what is possible, working together to make it happen, analyzing the effort, and dreaming again is what keeps the initiative going.

Youth involvement is a big part of this effort. The youth advisory board is very effective.

In one elementary school, students rotate through an asset leadership class. One young student defined assets, saying, "Cells build your body; assets build your soul."

West Middle School Teacher—

In an 8th-grade elective, "Life's a Choice," students learn about the asset categories, write a mission statement, and discuss the possible consequences of the choices they make. The students take their work home to have it signed by their parents. Parent feedback is phenomenal." Students use the asset language and the framework carries over into their lives outside the class.

"Cells build your body; assets build your soul."

Highlights — continued

Cherry Creek Schools Parent—
Schools need to have staff, parents, and students all engaged in the framework, and they have to start small. As PTO president at her child's elementary school, she got the buy-in from the principal, a group of teachers, and the school counselor, and created a standing asset committee. Assets also became part of the school's accountability plan—a critical piece to implementation. The Community Asset Project Board helps broaden asset awareness districtwide and raise funds for asset-building efforts.

Schools need to have staff, parents, and students all engaged in the framework, and they have to start small.

Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition President—

CSPC has trained both staff and 15 high school students from Lake County School District in the assets. Working top-down with the superintendent and principals, as well as with the student group, helps everyone work together. The high school principal attended the student training and is excited about supporting the students' efforts to infuse assets in the high school. The student group plans to present the asset message to the city council, school board, and community groups to give the message a ripple affect. CSPC is using a similar approach with a group of youth at Ranum High School in Westminster.

Monaco Elementary Principal—

Teacher trainings on the assets and overlaying the asset framework onto the Second Step bullyproofing program are helping to build a leadership team that is strength-based. One part of this will be a schoolwide recognition program. Another part will be to invite parent trainers in to discuss positive identity. The principal believes her community needs to focus on high expectations. She plans to create a parent study group that will discuss parenting books.

Cherry Creek Schools Parent—

Asset initiatives take time. Three years is a magical timeframe. The first stage is reinforcing asset-building activities and becoming more intentional with them. Then, connecting assets into school accountability through school safety plans helps sustain the efforts. The middle school principal has set a long-term goal of infusing assets into the curriculum in 3–5 years. The district's 2002 Youth Summit takes place Saturday, March 16, at Grandview High School. The Youth Summit needs tangible outcomes—such as creating a Youth Advisory Board for the Town of Centennial, and establishing criteria for a youth-approved, Youth Friendly Business certification.

What Educators Need to Move Forward

- To integrate assets into professional development programs (in a climate where the focus is on academics); to convince content-area trainers, universities, and re-certification trainers that asset training is important.

- Determining how assets can bolster Colorado Statewide Assessment Program (CSAP) scores.

- A directory of schools involved in asset-building efforts.

- Ways to merge the strength-based approach with academics.

- Ways to use assets in evaluations.

- A future forum at the district level that brings together principles, teachers, parents, and students.

- A way to show results from building the 13 assets linked to academic success.

- More ways to measure asset building with hard facts and data in order to sell it to the nay-sayers.

- Hands-on ideas for teachers and principals to take the next step after they have the asset vision.

- Practical ways for school staff to be asset builders (i.e. give each one a copy of the *150 Ways to Show Kids You Care* brochure and challenge staff members to take one idea each day and use it with students, parents, or other staff members).

- Ways to pull all a school's programs together under an asset umbrella.

- Ways to share the asset message teacher-to-teacher.

- Getting a group of youth from Cherry Creek Schools to package the Youth Summit and take it to middle and elementary schools.

The 40 Developmental Assets

EXTERNAL ASSETS

Support

1. Family support—Family life provides high levels of love and support.
2. Positive family communication—Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.
3. Other adult relationships—Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.
4. Caring neighborhood—Young person experiences caring neighbors.
5. Caring school climate—School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
6. Parent involvement in schooling—Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.

Empowerment

7. Community values youth—Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
8. Youth as resources—Young people are given useful roles in the community.
9. Service to others—Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
10. Safety—Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.

Boundaries and Expectations

11. Family boundaries—Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
12. School boundaries—School provides clear rules and consequences.
13. Neighborhood boundaries—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
14. Adult role models—Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
15. Positive peer influence—Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
16. High expectations—Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

Constructive Use of Time

17. Creative activities—Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
18. Youth programs—Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.
19. Religious community—Young person spends one or more hour per week in activities in a religious institution.
20. Time at home—Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

INTERNAL ASSETS

Commitment to Learning

21. Achievement motivation—Young person is motivated to do well in school.
22. School engagement—Young person is actively engaged in learning.
23. Homework—Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
24. Bonding to school—Young person cares about her or his school.
25. Reading for pleasure—Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

Positive Values

26. Caring—Young person places high value on helping other people.
27. Equality and social justice—Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
28. Integrity—Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
29. Honesty—Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."
30. Responsibility—Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
31. Restraint—Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

Social Competencies

32. Planning and decision making—Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
33. Interpersonal competence—Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
34. Cultural competence—Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
35. Resistance skills—Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
36. Peaceful conflict resolution—Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

Positive Identity

37. Personal power—Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
38. Self-esteem—Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
39. Sense of purpose—Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
40. Positive view of personal future—Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

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The Assets and Academic Achievement

The developmental assets are a research-based list of the essential building blocks of healthy youth development. The 40 assets comprise the relationships, experiences, and values that all young people need to grow up caring, confident, and responsible. Five of the assets are categorized as "commitment to learning" assets. These five assets and their tie to academic outcomes are listed below.

Achievement Motivation - Asset #21
- Increased high school completion
- Increased enrollment in college
- Increased reading and math achievement
- Better grades
- Increased positive perceptions of teachers
- Increased efforts at school
- Better management of stress and anxiety
- More effective communication skills

School Engagement - Asset #22
- Better attendance
- Higher academic self-concept
- More time on homework
- Greater feelings of support at school
- Greater feelings of support at home
- Less drug use
- Less adolescent childbearing

Homework - Asset #23
- Higher achievement test scores
- Higher grades
- Greater homework completion and accuracy
- Fewer conduct problems

Bonding to School - Asset #24
- Better attendance
- Higher academic self-concept
- More time on homework
- Increased college attendance
- Greater use of "deep" study techniques
- Greater feelings of support at school
- Greater feelings of support at home

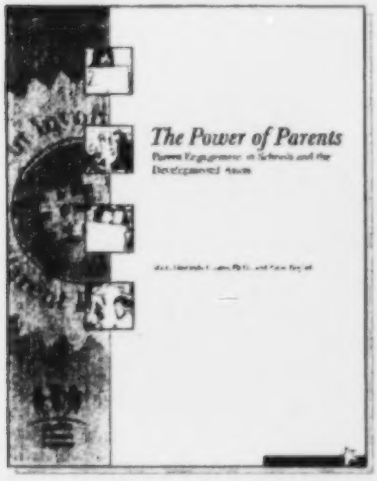
Reading for Pleasure - Asset #25
- Increased time on homework
- Increased reading achievement
- Better grades

These five assets are tied to strong academic outcomes.

Source: P.C. Scales and N. Leffert, Developmental Assets: A Synthesis of the Scientific Research on Adolescent Development *(Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 1999).*

Asset Resources for Educators

The Power of Parents: Parent Engagement in Schools and the Developmental Assets —$20



Many educators point to parent engagement as the single most important factor in determining a student's success in school. *The Power of Parents* describes how the developmental asset framework offers school communities a powerful resource for strengthening relationships between parents, school staff, and students.

The 56-page publication by María Guajardo Lucero, Ph.D., and Patsy Roybal, presents strategies that schools across Colorado are employing to strengthen the home/school connection and that lead to a caring school climate and improved student achievement. Activity sheets take readers step-by-step through a process that helps them employ the asset framework to strengthen parent-school partnerships.
ITEM RE12

Show teachers you care. Give them one of these!

Teacher Appreciation Pack — $5

Let teachers know they are important asset builders for young people by honoring them with a gift pack from Assets for Colorado Youth. Each pack contains a silver lapel pin with the ACY logo; a set of three note cards with children's artwork; and an ACY pen with an asset-building message.

ITEM SP03

Expect Great Things — $35

28-minute video and Discussion Guide

Teachers helped develop the Discussion Guide to this powerful video that features interviews with ethnically diverse leaders who have played instrumental roles in movements for freedom and equality. The interviews focus on the important and empowering relationships these leaders had while growing up. Together, the video and Discussion Guide promote classroom discussions on the importance of intergenerational relationships and asset builders in one's life.

Says one middle school teacher, "It's like having a documentary on the effect of relationships. I would use it with students in grades 6–12 and would hope it would inspire them to interview their own parents and grandparents."
ITEM RE02
(Video only, $25; ITEM RE03)

150 Ways to Show Kids You Care Brochures — $15

(pack of 20; two-sided in English/Spanish)

All adults can make a positive difference in a young person's life. These popular fold-out brochures offer friendly reminders and simple ideas for how to show the young people around us they are supported and valued. Hang one at home or in your classroom. Folded size: 5 1/2 x 3 3/4 inches; unfolds to 5 1/2 x 33 3/4 inches.
ITEM RE11

Assets and Education Bookmarks — $5 *(pack of 10)*

Featuring 10 assets that promote student achievement, these colorful, laminated bookmarks are bilingual in English/Spanish. Each includes a tip for building that particular asset.
ITEM RE16

About Assets for Colorado Youth

Assets for Colorado Youth (ACY) is a nonprofit organization that champions change for positive youth development by building capacity, focusing on individual and community strengths, and increasing developmental assets in youth.

Through its expanding network of educators, youth-serving organizations, and community leaders, ACY advances the developmental asset framework that ensures youth grow up with the supportive relationships they need to succeed.

ACY first opened its doors in 1997 as a statewide initiative of Search Institute, a nonprofit organization, and The Colorado Trust, a philanthropic foundation. With the continued investment and commitment of The Colorado Trust, Assets for Colorado Youth is setting a national standard for providing innovation, best practices, and leadership to promote a strength-based approach to youth development.

For more information, visit the ACY website: www.buildassets.org, or call 303-832-1587; (toll-free outside metro Denver): 1-888-KID-7871.

Assets for Colorado Youth advances the developmental asset framework to ensure youth grow up with the supportive relationships they need to succeed.

Assets for Colorado Youth wishes to thank each of the educators, students, parents, and family advocates who participated in the 2001 Educators' Forum for their time, their willingness to share, and their commitment to building assets in the lives of youth.

BUILD ASSETS
Anytime. Anywhere.

ASSETS
for Colorado
YOUTH

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